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## A Tribute to Ken Jennings

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The inaugural issue of the *Osprey Journal of Ideas and Inquiry* is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Kenneth M. Jennings (1943-1999). His dedication to research with his undergraduate and graduate students is an example of the best kind of teaching. He set a standard that all faculty members at the University of North Florida can only hope to achieve.

### Dr. Kenneth M. Jennings



Dr. Ken Jennings was an outstanding teacher with more than 25 years of experience at UNF. He was the first UNF recipient of the State University System's Professor of Excellence Award in 1997. Dr. Jennings was the Richard de Raismes Kip Professor of Industrial Relations at UNF at the time of his death in 1999. His primary teaching responsibilities included graduate and undergraduate courses in personnel and labor relations. He received the "Outstanding Teaching Award" from UNF in 1985, the "Outstanding Service Award to the Black Student Union" in 1982 and the Teaching Incentive Program Award in 1993.

He was the author of a number of books including *Balls and Strikes: The Money Game in Professional Baseball* published in 1990. The book was selected by Princeton University as one of the most noteworthy books in industrial relations and received favorable reviews in the *New York Times* and *Publishers' Weekly*.

## A Tribute to Ken Jennings

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By Dr. Roger Wolters

Ken Jennings was my professor, mentor, and friend. While I was an undergraduate student at UNF, Dr. Jennings introduced me to the field of industrial relations and the important role labor plays in the success of any business enterprise. I chose to major in human resource management because Dr. Jennings made the area of study sound so interesting and often controversial. His reality-oriented, pragmatic approach to business appealed to me, as did the importance he placed on understanding issues from both an employer's and employee's perspective. Teaching labor relations in the South has often been described as akin to "missionary work" requiring strength of character and infinite patience. Ken possessed both. His genuine desire to help students learn is a characteristic of his I have tried to emulate in my own academic career.

Ken gave me the opportunity to become his research assistant in the Management Department and introduced me to the wonderful world of research and writing. Successful research begins with a good idea and access to the data, two axioms I learned quickly from Ken. This was a research goal that Ken favored and passed along to me. Ken's suggested revisions on paper drafts helped me to develop a more clear and concise writing style. Even years later, I still remember the excitement and satisfaction of opening the letter from the journal editor and reading "your article has been accepted for publication."

Working with Ken gave me an opportunity to learn the benefits and challenges associated with a career in academics. More importantly, it made me realize that I could successfully pursue a career as a teacher and researcher at a major university. After working for one year as an instructor at the University of North Florida, I left to pursue my Ph.D. degree at Ken's alma mater, the University of Illinois. Ken's encouragement and advice were instrumental in my ability to successfully complete my degree program. His advice included information on academic life at the Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations as well as detailed notes on places to eat, live, visit, etc. in the Champaign-Urbana area. Ken was an avid Cub's fan and his description of Wrigley Field and surrounding dining establishments made every trip to Chicago an adventure.

Ken also helped me to obtain my first full-time, tenure track position in academia by mentioning my qualifications to the co-author of his recently published labor relations text, Dr. William Holley, Jr. at Auburn University. Some 21 years later I am still teaching and researching as a faculty member in the Department of Management at Auburn University. I was honored when asked to join as a co-author of Ken's and Bill's successful text, **The Labor Relations Process**, now in its 7th edition.

I will always consider Ken Jennings and my father to have been the two greatest influences in my life. Ken Jennings will be missed by many, but never forgotten.